EVERYBODY'S BODY.

BY EDWARD GARRETT,

Author of "The Occupations of a Retired Life," "John Winter: a Story of Harvests," "By Still Waters," "Not by Bread Alone," etc.

"Eh, dearie, hush! There, there." *p.* 146.

CHAPTER V.

THE BLOW FALLS.

MINNIE kept silent as she walked by her husband's side from the Blythes' villa to their own home. She snatched at the small luxury of one moment more of frenzied hope that all was well, which is so often the last consolation of the despairing. Besides, without looking back, she felt sure that the Misses Blythe were watching their retreating guests, and in all her agony, even her butterfly nature was staunch enough to strive to hide from prying eyes that strange hands had opened for her some secret which her own husband had kept closed against her.

Neither did Sydney speak. He felt sure that his wife had heard something, and yet he, too, strove to deny it to himself. She might think that he and Mr. Blythe were only discussing some impersonal phase of commercial arrangements.

They opened their door with a latch-key. The house was pervaded with the smell of mint and thyme, a big bunch of such savoury herbs having been recently handed over the garden wall by Mrs. Compton. From the kitchen came the sound of Mrs. Ruffle softly stirring the fire.

Sydney walked first into the parlour, and struck a match and lighted the gas. Minnie watched him with wide eyes. His did not meet hers.

"Sydney," she said, "what are these people saying? Was it you whom those women saw on the Richmond omnibus? What was Mr. Blythe talking about?"

"Dear me, what a string of questions! How can you care what they fancy or choose to say?" answered Sydney, with a clumsy attempt at lightness.

Was it but a cowardly effort to gain another moment's futile respite? Or was it an instinctive feeling that a prolonged suspense might better prepare the girl-wife for the

sharp blow of dismal certainty? He struck a second match and lighted another gas-jet, and Minnie saw that his hand trembled.

"Sydney," she cried, "I am certain there is something wrong, and what other people know, I have a right to know!"

The strong self-control she had laid upon herself during the last hour told on her now in nervous irritation. Her voice was sharp and shrill, and her little hand went out to grasp her husband's arm.

Straightway he was unjust and cruel, as people are so apt to be with those whom they have wronged and hurt. He shook off her imploring clasp, and said, angrily—

"There! Now make a noise and sob and roar. That's what I knew you would do, or I would have told you before; but as well first as last, it seems! I've been discharged from the office; I've not been going there for the last week. And now, of course, you are to rail at me for just trying to keep it dark, in hopes I might get in somewhere else before you found it out, and so spare you all the worry. Fine thanks I'll get! And I daresay I was an ass to attempt it; a little real worry 'll only do you good."

Minnie stood for a moment like one thunderstruck. She was too ignorant of the terrible verities of life to at once comprehend the full import of what had befallen them. If Sydney had told her gently and kindly at a fitting opportunity, she would have been but too full of sanguine faith in her husband and ready hope in his prospects. But it must be something dreadful which had changed Sydney thus! And as Minnie's mind went swiftly back over the great gulf from peace and prosperity which she had so unwittingly crossed in the last hour, she understood the Blythes' changed manner and the hidden meaning of their expressions of half-critical pity. She began to cry.

"Oh, what a shame it is that you let other people——"

"There you are!" Sydney interrupted, roughly; "make a grievance out of that! Why, if you hadn't been so taken up with all your little twopenny-halfpenny troubles, you'd have noticed how miserable I was. If I'd been going to the office as you say you thought I was, I'd have been late these two last mornings, thanks to your dawdling about."

"Oh, Syd—and I thought it was so kind of you not to make a fuss when you saw I was doing my best, though I wasn't used to the work!" gasped the poor little woman.

"Oh, yes, you thought the governors wouldn't mind me coming late if I was helping my wife," sneered Sydney. "That's all the idea of business that you've got. A pretty wife for a man to have when he is in trouble!"

"Syd!" said Minnie, breathlessly, so overwhelmed by a new idea that she forgot to resent her husband's unkindness, "the three-years' furniture system man will be coming for his payment to-morrow!" She knew he had had to come twice for his last instalment. So what would happen now?

"Well, then he'll have to go away again—or he can sell us all up, for aught I care. The house has not been made so particularly comfortable," answered Sydney; and then Minnie's nerves, strained by her late unwonted labours and recent agitation, finally gave way, and shriek after shriek of sheer frenzy brought poor old Mrs. Ruffle groping from the kitchen.

"Eh, is there trouble?" she cried. "The poor young thing! Eh, dearie, hush! It's not crying out that'll do any good, but crying inwardly to the Lord. There, there! Here's your dear husband wanting to comfort you. A trial should come easy that is laid on two; though maybe then we try to bear it without the Lord Himself. Hush, dearie, hush! Here's the master a-trying to get hold of your hand. Give it to him, and you'll feel a sight better at once."

It is odd how the imputation of a right attitude of mind inclines us to fall into it. Sydney yielded at once.

"It's all my fault, Mrs. Ruffle," he said, penitently. "Something has happened which has put me about terribly—for her sake chiefly—and instead of encouraging her to speak out to me and answering her gently, I talked like an awful brute. There, Minnie, there! you'll forgive me, won't you?"

Minnie flung herself, sobbing, on his shoulder, with words inaudible but to him.

"That's right," said Mrs. Ruffle. "Let her say out what's in her heart, sir. It's not as if she was a woman screaming out because you wouldn't buy her a bonnet, or had found her out with an unpaid bill—as I've known some do. It was just something came that was too much for her in itself, and your speaking sharp was the last straw that broke the camel's back. If a poor soul knows there's somebody will hear reason and see justice and show pity, it'll not be tempted to cry out like a hunted animal. And now, sir, won't you bring her into the kitchen? Her hands are cold, and there's a nice bit o' fire there, an' I'm going straight to bed, so that you'll have it all to yourselves."

Sydney obeyed like a child, leading Minnie by the hand. Mrs. Ruffle drew up two chairs in front of the hearth and went away. They sat there, side by side, for a while without speaking.

Then Minnie whispered, "Will father lend us money for that man, Syd?"

"He can't," said Sydney; "he borrowed something from me to pay his last life insurance premium. But don't you trouble, Minnie; I'll go down to the office before the man comes, and get something arranged."

"Do you think they will wait till next time, and let us pay two instalments at once?" asked Minnie.

"Yes, I think so; only we shall then have to pay more than the two instalments," Sydney admitted.

"I suppose you are sure to get something to do very soon?" inquired Minnie, anxiously.

"You can't think how few places there are going, and how many want to get into them," said Sydney, evasively.

"Why did the firm dismiss you?" asked Minnie, very timidly.

"It was pretty high-handed of them," said Sydney, the rasp returning to his voice. "They got to know that I happened to make a few bets, and somebody went and told them we had our furniture on credit, and didn't seem very prompt in paying up. So they said they wished to dispense with my services, and when I ventured a remonstrance they had the impudence to say that when they saw any employé of theirs on the down-grade, they preferred to part from him while they could give him a fair character, and if the fright gave him a check it would end in being the greatest kindness they could show him."

"It wasn't right to bet, was it, Syd?" asked Minnie, gently.

"Well, perhaps it wasn't," said Sydney; "but nearly everybody does it. And I'm sure you were very pleased when you won a pair of gloves from me on the day of the boat-race."

The little woman was self-convicted. "That seemed so different," she murmured. And then she was thoughtful

for a while, the great importance of small influences being borne in upon her as it had never been before—as it scarcely ever is, save by some costly experience of our own.

"Sydney," she said at last, "don't you think the firm might have reconsidered the matter if you had told them you would never bet again, and would faithfully promise to pay up your debts?"

Sydney's brow darkened. "I don't know what they might or might not have done," he replied; "for, of course, I did not give them such a chance. I was not to be treated like a child. I just said, 'Very well, gentlemen, please yourselves. You'll find your ledgers all right, and I hope you'll soon be well suited.'"

"Did they soon engage somebody else?" asked Minnie.

"Oh, yes," answered Sydney; "he came 'to get into the ways of the place' exactly two days after I got my notice of dismissal. I believe he must have been somebody they wanted to find work for, and so they picked a fault in me. Many such mean tricks are played."

"But the firm are just the sort of people who would object to betting," observed Minnie. She remembered that her father, a very easy-going man himself, popular in commercial rooms, fond of his toddy and cigar, and not averse to his game of billiards, had, nevertheless, reckoned it among "young Harrison's" recommendations as his daughter's lover that he was in "one of the old-style houses which expect their fellows to keep very straight." Minnie's best ideal of life had been before her all day, at its very brightest. There are some people in whose presence such ideals always seem to come very near to us, and to be quite realisable. Possibly humble, blind Mrs. Ruffle was one of these helpful people. The pure in heart who are blessed because they shall see God are also those through whom God is seen by their neighbours.

Strange it is, too, how often it happens that just when our cherished ideal of life seems nearest, and when we have girded up all our energies in the resolve to make it reality, it is suddenly snatched away from our grasp! Life turns one of its sharp corners, and lo! the fair vision is no longer in view.

Perhaps it is because we are not yet quite ready for it. We need a little more shaking or sifting, or the good habits which we meant to adopt might soon stiffen into mere self-righteousness—that shroud of a dead soul through which no voice short of the Divine Voice itself can penetrate.

Poor little Minnie, sitting beside her husband in the dull firelight! Certainly she did not quite enter into all the terrors of the altered state of things, and she made up her mind not to say one desponding word. But down in her heart there was a consciousness that life was shaken to its foundations, that the pretty little home had suddenly turned into a mere wind-blown tent, and that all her cherished possessions had possible wings with which to fly away.

To each soul it comes with the surprise of an original discovery, that "here we have no continuing city."

In the middle of the night Sydney heard a low voice whisper, "Are you awake?"

"Yes, dear," said he; "what is it?"

"Did you know about this before you bought the cheval glass?" she asked.

There was a moment's pause. "Yes," he said, rather abruptly. "I wanted to please you while I could. And when we like we can sell it again. That's how people should do, Minnie. They should not just go without things, nor yet let them stick to them like dead weights. And I did want to please you, Minnie."

Minnie said nothing. She scarcely knew how to meet her husband's axiom, it sounded so like some of the words one heard in church about "using this world as not abusing it"—the text her father had always quoted to prove that he might drink as much toddy as he liked, provided he did not become incapably drunk, but "kept his head and legs"! Yet she felt that both her father and her husband were perverting the idea somehow; it could justify neither the going to the extreme edge of evil, nor the reckless grasp of possessions, without any intention of dignifying them by absorbing them into the uses and associations of life. But Minnie did not know how to express her feeling, and would have made a sad muddle had she attempted it.

CHAPTER VI.

DRIFTING DOWNWARD.

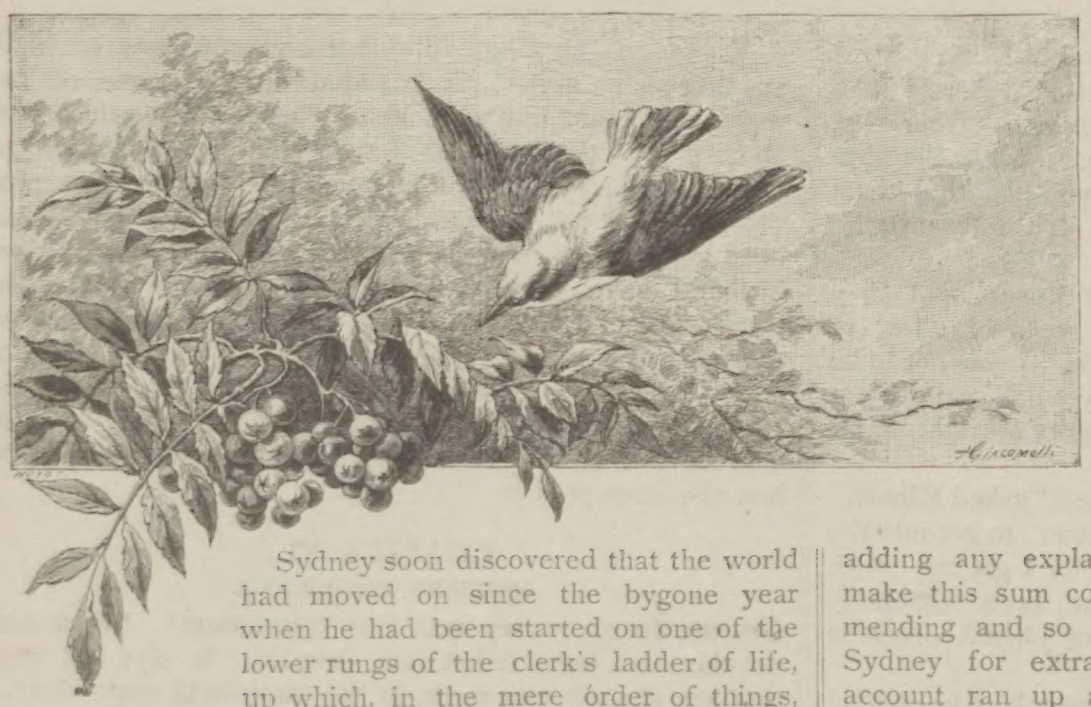
Oh, the dreary, weary time that came next! Yet it was not then that hope faded into despair. It was not then that any change was made in the household expenditures or habits. Sydney even asked Minnie what she meant to do about getting another servant, but was quite ready to agree with her that while they "didn't know where they were to be," they would retain the help of Mrs. Ruffle. It "would be more fair to the girl," he said. Minnie remembered the conversation they had before Mary Anne left.

The three-years-hire-system people proved wonderfully complacent, and the young couple experienced that perilous sense of relief which comes from debt not discharged, but deferred—the kind of spirit in which a famous wit is said to have sighed, "Thank goodness, that is settled," when he had only signed a promissory note.

Yet Minnie always afterwards remembered those days as some of the hardest to be lived through. There was too much real change for so little to be apparent! There was nothing to look forward to. And Minnie knew that the Blythes were watching and commenting on everything, and wondering how long they would manage to hold out. They knew everybody on the Green; they would tell everybody all they knew. They did not know the Comptons, and those were the very people Minnie began to think she would like to know. The busybodies always know everything at once; because they are, like flies, gadding about and irritating wherever they settle. The helpers are minding their own business first, so that they may be ready to help when they can—and may.

Minnie wished she had not opened up acquaintance with Capulet Lodge. When we have to live through any bit of stern reality, we find that every mere acquaintance who has not in him or her the roots of friendship (a plant which never grows on poor soils) is nothing more nor less than a bed of stinging nettles.

Sydney went out every morning at about the same hour as before, and returned in the evening. But nobody can ever keep up a pretence like reality itself; so when the weather was unpleasant, or he felt tired and disheartened, he lapsed into later hours. Observant eyes fixed on his movements could easily note the change. Minnie thought to herself that Mrs. Ruffle must see it, and the Comptons too, or at least Mr. Pyper. They none of them threw out any feelers for information. Mrs. Ruffle continued her patient and cheery help at intervals, and it was she herself who voluntarily suspended it; they must not do that, Sydney said, they must save appearances. The next-door neighbours, when thrown in Minnie's way, were just as genial as before.



Sydney soon discovered that the world had moved on since the bygone year when he had been started on one of the lower rungs of the clerk's ladder of life, up which, in the mere order of things, he had since mounted in the old firm's counting-house. He found that among the conditions of nearly every appointment worth the having were the knowledge of shorthand and of at least one Continental language. He said to Minnie that he wished he had learned these branches when he was a boy, rather than the futile Latin and mechanical map-drawing, which had been the favourite accomplishments of the cheap, showy boarding school where he had received his education.

Minnie suggested that it might be as well to take up the desired subjects now; perhaps he might find an inexpensive evening class, and he had plenty of time for private study. But Sydney shook his head. "It was too late," he said. "He could not master these things without weeks of hard work, and if he were to wait for a place till then, why—" he paused there, leaving Minnie's scared imagination to fill up the hiatus. No, even such as he was, there must be some hole into which he would fit, and he must just look out for that.

Sydney had yet to learn that though it is better early than late, it is also better late than never, and that so long as anything which ought to be done can be done, it is never too late to do it. Time passed on and on—he might have made a fair study of French and shorthand—and still he remained unemployed.

The doubled instalment of the furniture bill fell due, and this time Minnie's father paid it, not without an angry protest and some scornful words for his daughter's husband. Naturally, it did not feel very hard to Minnie to accept this help from her own parent, whom she had always found to be kind and indulgent in his loose, negligent way. But she noticed that to Sydney the father-in-law's aid was like a blow; he seemed to cower under it. Sydney had been always conscious of some superiority over the old rough-and-ready commercial traveller, and had been ever willing to oblige the old man with a little loan or some help over his troublesome accounts. The bitterness of our fall is never fully felt till we have to look up and plead where we have been accustomed to look down and concede. Minnie would have sat easily enough under a debt to her father, but she felt that Sydney would never be himself again until this was repaid.

Sydney and Minnie both had a substantial stock of good clothing, and yet the scarcity of cash was soon visible in their appearance, because neither liked to take any for those trifling supplies which must be inevitably made from time to time, if a respectable toilet is to be maintained.

Minnie did not know exactly how much money her husband had at his command when his income failed, and with that curious shyness which often overtakes us when we have the best right and reason to be brave, she never liked to ask a direct question on the point. He had been accustomed to give her a weekly sum for housekeeping; and when she ventured to inquire whether she was still to have this, he had abruptly answered in the affirmative, without adding any explanation. All Minnie could do was to make this sum cover any casual expenses, such as boot-mending and so forth, for which hitherto she had asked Sydney for extra cash. And how the boot-mending account ran up at this time of Sydney's weary daily wanderings!

What strange grooves Minnie's mind turned into! How could she make a little money? She had once known a girl who managed to find a small market for fancy work. Why should not she do likewise? She searched the huge disheartening advertising columns of the newspapers which Sydney brought home, if haply she might there find some clue that she could follow. She tendered five shillings as an "entrance fee" to some establishment, which for that small honorarium offered to give instruction and employment in the production of a fashionable speciality. When she went back to the "establishment," it was shut up, and announced "to be let," and she found herself one of a group of defrauded femininity, termagant or tearful, according to its nature or its needs. They frightened her, this crowd of shabby, draggled women, who looked askance on her neat gown and pretty hat, and seemed to resent her presence among them. Should she soon be like them? One of them told her she was a bank clerk's widow, and had got three children to keep. Was she able to do it? Minnie asked, with a leaping hope that if any woman could do so much, she might come in not far behind. But the other shook her head. She'd got to try, she said; if she couldn't—well, there was the workhouse! And where could the law be that let swindlers rob the poor publicly? She had put faith in this advertisement because she'd seen it so often—though, she owned, with different addresses attached. How was any woman to know what was genuine and what wasn't? If one went sniffing about suspiciously, one would lose what might be worth getting. Then another put in that she knew something which was genuine—they were really giving out work at an address which she named. It was only "clocking" stockings, and the pay was awfully poor, but she should be glad enough to go after it, only her eyesight was so bad that she was no use in that line.

Minnie took the hint, and got some stockings to "clock." The people who gave them out asked where her husband worked, and when she said he was out of a situation, they made her pay a small deposit before they would permit her to carry away a dozen pairs of fine black hose, which were to be "clocked" with grey silk.

Oh, how hard she worked those days! It happened just then that Sydney was out on his peregrinations for hours and hours together, and she suspended all her housework, and took no food except the tea or the eggs that poor

old Mrs. Ruffle was able to prepare unaided. Minnie devoted herself to her "bread-winning."

The dozen hose were "clocked" at last, and, with aching head and half-blinded eyes, Minnie, reckoning up the price she was to be paid, found she had earned at the rate of three-farthings an hour! The total came to three shillings. She took her work back. Walking as far as she could on the way, she was yet forced to avail herself (as also when she had brought her work home) of a two-penny omnibus ride. This reduced her profits to two and eightpence. The woman who looked through the work docked a trifle for imperfections, and in the end Minnie carried home two and fivepence as the price of nearly forty hours' labour!

She wept bitterly. She saw how it was—a woman pitted against a machine, and "hand labour" only preferred as a fancy or a fad by those who were not willing to pay for it in proper proportion.

Why, "Mary Anne," with every want supplied, by labour which was only cheery and healthful, with great intervals of leisure, and plenty of time for rest, had earned more (needed for her clothes only) by her wage of a pound per month! How much safer and happier it was to make the most of the means one had than to try to earn more!

Oh, why had not she and Sydney begun differently? Why had they not furnished two little rooms? They might have paid for sufficient homely plenishing by the very deposit they had made with the three-years-system people. Why had not she done all the household work?—keeping herself so usefully and happily occupied that she would not have cared to ask Sydney to take her to boat-races and theatres, where one was tempted to ape the fashions and manners of those one encountered there.

Yes, she knew it was she herself who had proposed that bet of the pair of gloves to her husband! And she had got him to buy raffle-tickets for her, too. She had been accustomed to such ways among her father's associates, though that old gentleman, from prudential reasons, had always drawn a hard and fast line at "horse-racing." She had thought no harm of going so far as she had gone, and Sydney had thought no harm of going a little farther.

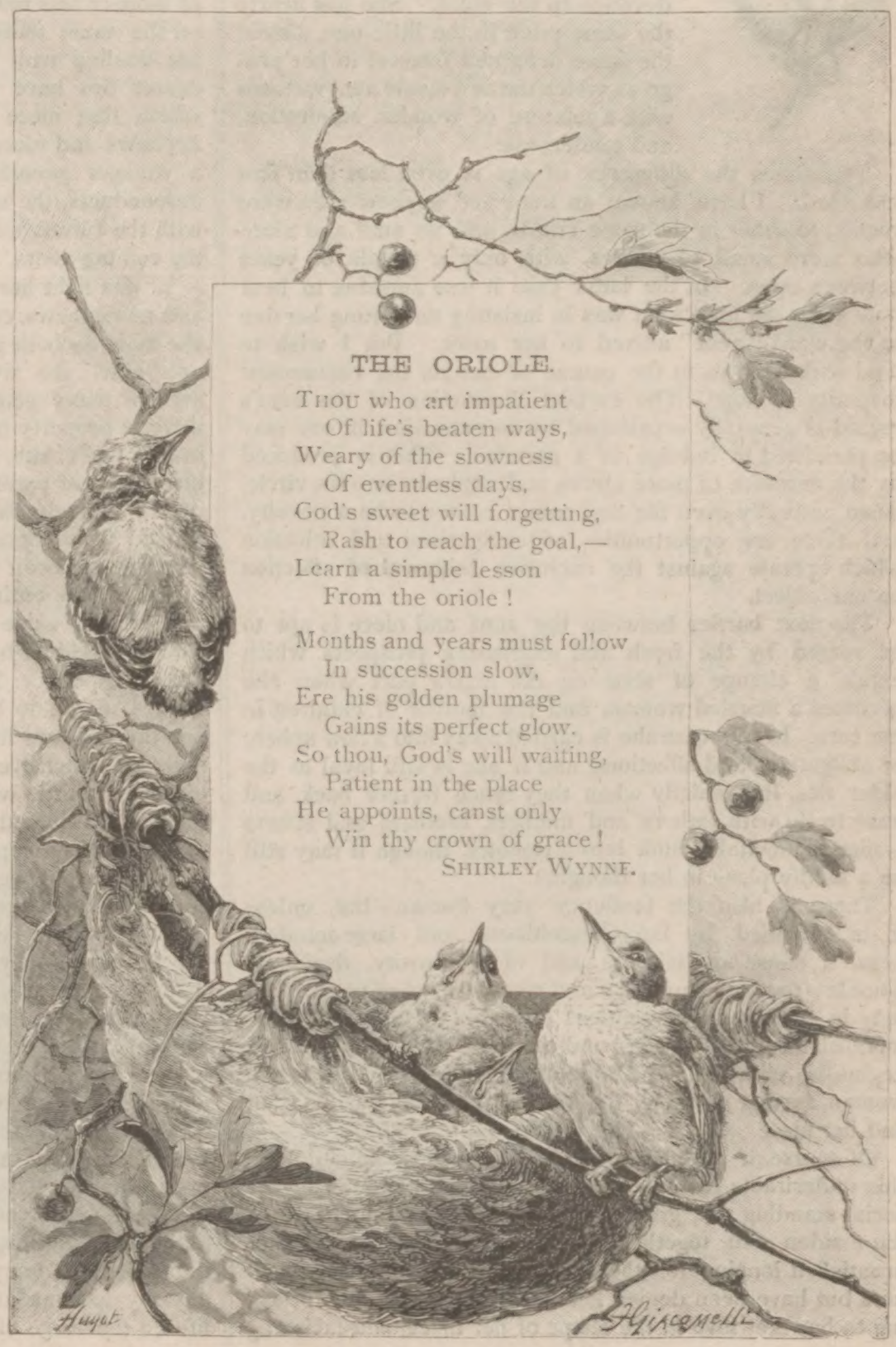
And now another of those dreaded instalment dates was drawing near. Yet Sydney had not alluded to it, and his reticence scared Minnie more than any amount of expressed anxiety would have done. She felt sure he would not ask help again from her father, and her father had not come near them for some time. But, perhaps, that meant he was coming just at the right time, that he was sorry for his harshness, and would actually volunteer a further grant of the aid he had given so grudgingly.

As if in answer to the hope she was cherishing, there came a postman's rat-tat, and a letter to her in her father's handwriting.

Minnie's heart leaped high. Surely this was a beautiful instance of the "thought-reading" the newspapers talked about. She would try to carry the experiment farther before she opened the envelope. Yes, she felt sure it was thus her father wanted to tell them how he meant to stand by them, and he thought it would spare their feelings if he wrote this instead of coming to say it.

Then, with trembling fingers, she opened the letter.

(*Continued on page* 161.)



THE MAIDEN AUNT.

BY SARAH TYTLER,

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O the maiden aunt in her later teens or earlier twenties, the little niece (whose arrival on the scene brings to her young kinswoman a title of honour—one had almost said a grave and reverent title—which is at once fascinating and mirth-provoking) is usually a charming novelty and much-thought-of pet. The youthful aunt is, as a rule, only second to the mother and grandmother in her devotion to the child. She has nearly the same pride in the little one, almost the same delighted interest in her progress, which the new-made aunt watches with a mixture of wonder, admiration, and tenderness.

Sometimes the difference of age is even less than that indicated. I have known an aunt and nephew who were rocked together in the same cradle, and an aunt and niece who were small playmates, with only a couple of years between them. In the latter case it was amusing to hear how strict the little aunt was in insisting on getting her due in the word "aunt" affixed to her name. But I wish to deal with what is, in the course of nature, the commonest disparity of age. The earliest diminution of the aunt's regard is generally occasioned by its extension, if one may be permitted to indulge in a paradox. This is produced by the entrance of more nieces and nephews into the circle, when naturally even the first comer ceases to be a novelty, and there are opportunities of comparison and selection which operate against the exclusive bestowal of affection on one object.

The next barrier between the aunt and niece is apt to be reared by the fresh and engrossing prospects which herald a change of state on the aunt's part when she becomes a married woman, and the mother of children in her turn. In this case she is carried away into a new sphere of obligations and affections, and if she is still loyal to the older ties, it is chiefly when they reach farther back, and have to do with fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters—nieces inevitably sink into a remoter, though it may still be a kindly place in her thoughts.

There is also the tendency, very human—but, unless it is modified by large-heartedness and large-mindedness, a sense of fairness and of generosity, decidedly ignoble—towards emulation and rivalry between cousins not only in their own thoughtless eyes, but in those of their more blameworthy fathers and mothers. This competition, beginning with babies and ending with grown men and women, further weakens the tie between the married aunt and her niece.

Of course, if the married aunt happens to be childless, this undesirable result is prevented. In addition, her higher social standing and greater social influence than those of the maiden aunt, together with what may be her stronger unsatisfied longing for the children that might have been hers but have been denied her, are in favour of her returning to her first love in the shape of her niece, and lavishing upon her once more the stream of regard which has been interrupted, but not diverted, into a nearer, more personal channel.

But it is difficult to argue on complex human nature. I have heard a married aunt, the happy, strongly-attached mother of several children, say of the niece who was their senior, who had been the first child of the second generation introduced to her aunt, that she (the aunt) could never forget, even while looking in the faces of her own children, how dear that little niece had been to her, could never cease to view her with a special warmth of attachment.

But I am not dealing with married aunts, whose claims and privileges are wont to dwindle into the rank of those of more or less motherly, familiar friends of the family, much on the same footing with other friends of the family. I am dealing with the maiden aunt, whom no nearer and dearer ties have gradually withdrawn from her niece, to whom that niece still stands as one among a dozen of nephews and nieces, or, it may be, as the single member of a younger generation, her aunt's collateral descendant or descendants, the multiform or solitary bond which links her with the future, as with the past, her hostage to fortune in the coming years.

In this light her niece, supposing she has only one niece and no nephews, continues an object of supreme importance, the more as both grow older, to her aunt. If the niece is not now, she will certainly become, should the two survive many years, her aunt's nearest relation and heir, if there is property to inherit. The niece's success or failure in life, her health, happiness, and general well-being grow, inevitably, of paramount moment to the aunt.

The difficulty is that the process by which this result is arrived at is a gradual one, and that the pair, even if they have never been far separated—nay, even if they have dwelt, for the entire life of one of the two, under the same roof, in the same family circle—may have drifted apart, slowly, possibly, but as steadily as they have progressed in other respects. The maiden aunt has, doubtless, not always meant to be a maiden aunt. She may have had her dreams and her awakenings, her disappointments and reverses, which even if she is a good woman, and has come out of the battle with faith strengthened, not crushed; with temper chastened and mellowed, not soured; with unselfishness deepened, not converted into a repellant, defiant, grasping egotism, are likely to render her a little less confident, pleasure-loving and "jolly" than some of the untried matrons who are her contemporaries. Therefore she acquires an air of overwhelming staidness, "slowness" in modern phrase, stupidity, or exasperating finicalness to her niece, who begins to think and speak of her father or mother's sister, who fondled and played with the girl for many a happy hour in her infancy and childhood, as dull and tiresome, provoking, antiquated, "funny" in her ways. The rift is indefinitely widened, and the wedge which is driven in, grows at once sharper and heavier, if the aunt makes an authoritative attempt to control the girl whom she was accustomed to command, without any thought of her authority being disputed, only the other day, as the elder in the struggle is tempted to define the time. (Only the other day, my dear madam! Why, it is the greater part of a young life on the verge of womanhood.) It is worst of all when

there is anything so odious as jealousy, and contending claims between the aunt and niece; when the aunt declines to be superseded, clings to her fast waning youth in a desperate and helpless effort to preserve it from being finally set aside and extinguished, tries to turn back her youthful competitor in the race and to keep her arrested in the stage of short frocks and flowing hair. The aim is that the time may be delayed when she will be the young lady of the house *par excellence*, and in that light will take precedence of all other unmarried women in the family, will occupy the place of honour amongst them, will, under her father and mother's wing, go into company as a matter of course, and be ranked next to the heads of the house in the order of invitations. Thus unless the aunt has some special claim to distinction she must infallibly give way to the niece, and consent to accept a secondary position.

But before this point is attained, much bitterness may have arisen, and the seeds of life-long alienation may have been sown. Now, in this disastrous climax, the maiden aunt at least is often as much to blame as the niece. How is it that the two have become so completely estranged? It is very possible that the aunt's love, to be shown in sympathy and forbearance, failed the niece at a critical time. It is comparatively easy to be fond of a helpless little child, more or less engaging in its helplessness, whose claims can hardly clash with those of a grown-up person. It is not so easy to be fond of a half-grown schoolgirl, full of crude, undigested notions, either tiresomely shy and awkward, without tact or discrimination, or quite as frequently in this generation of precocious youngsters, self-confident, audacious, opinionative and supercilious in her rash inexperience. I have known many an adoring aunt in the days of the niece's babyhood fail the girl in her teens, fail her in not making allowance for her, in not cultivating her, guiding her, entering affectionately into her difficulties and troubles, and bearing good-humouredly with her fits of waywardness and perversity, until the juvenile culprit returns to a better frame of mind. The aunt has not the mother's authority, hardly even when she happens to be the head of an orphan household. In other circumstances, if she would preserve her niece's regard, she must win the girl's confidence, and make her the aunt's friend. For this honourable aim, the maiden aunt commands usually more leisure than falls to the lot of the married aunt. I do not mean by this recommendation that in weak subserviency, or to gain some end of her own, the aunt should forget her superiority in years, in knowledge of the world, and in what should be wisdom, and reduce herself to her niece's level, backing her, or going hand in hand with her in such levities and follies of girlhood as the niece chooses to practise. However acceptable such accommodating behaviour may be to a silly, headstrong girl at the time, it will certainly end by inspiring her with a thorough contempt for her shallow or time-serving aunt. No, the aunt, however indulgent and patient, must never lose aught of her natural dignity, her title to respect, her true position as her niece's loving mentor and firm friend—firm, though gentle in contradiction and condemnation if necessary. There is no need that the aunt should on this account be quieter, graver, more old-fashioned in her notions than she can help being. Her love for the girl should warm and mellow her heart, and make the aunt live and grow young again in the niece, much as a mother lives and renews her youth in her daughter, without losing a grain of her self-respect and filial honour. This is the real retaining and restoring of the cheerful interest in all the affairs of life, the perennial contentment and gaiety of spirit which is the merry heart that does good like medicine. It survives, in its magnanimous heights and depths of sympathy, many a trial and adversity; it endears the middle-aged and old to the young, who take courage from their senior's reverent faith and sweet serenity, and go forth bravely, trustfully, and joyously, as should be true of the young, to face the brightness and the darkness, the green pastures and still waters, the stormy seas and dreary deserts of life.

It may be, it is a little hard to recognise that youth is on the wane, to feel a new generation in the shape of a well-grown niece treading upon our heels, but middle age—aye, and old age—have bountiful compensations to those who have played their parts honestly and loyally, and will accept thankfully the compensations at God's own hand. There is such a thing even as growing old gracefully; and the aunt who is just and generous, and has sense and spirit, will let her niece have her day from dawn to sunset, will retire in her favour voluntarily and willingly, if not gladly, will smooth her way for her, brighten it with all the good things in the aunt's power, and will utterly fail to provoke invidious comparisons and mean rivalry.

BY DIFFERENT PATHS.

THOSE young people were hedged about, and no mistake; for if ever there were a pair of beings on this earth who felt the responsibility of parenthood to be a weight, the father and mother of Albert and Dorothea Tregask were those two.

Now, this was right enough up to a certain point; but it led them into a grave mistake.

"*In* the world, but not *of* it," the Master said. But these children were such hot-house seedlings that they grew up in no wise stiff enough of stem to stand against the storms of outdoor life. Moreover, unlike their vegetable prototypes, they grew up possessed of Mother Eve's most dangerous power of independent thought.

Now, next door there came to live some children whose parents went on quite a different principle. These happy children "went to school" instead of being taught at home, and consequently "came home for the holidays."

Such holidays! Only spent in a dull old garden, to be sure, similar to that in which Albert and Dorothea were kept safe; but such a garden it was when they were home!

Albert and Dorothea began by hearing, conjecturing, and envying. Then boy-nature suggested that walls were capable of being scaled; and—adventure always being sweeter for being shared—Dorothea was dragged up to a seat on the ivy-cushioned coping, and acquaintance was struck up.

From that moment submissive innocence departed from that sheltered Eden, and rebellion entered in.

Not long after came the time when the gates of the said Eden had to be set wide. Home-teaching had gone as far as it could. Albert must be prepared to take his place in the commercial world, Dorothea to go into society; so they took wing from the old nest, with the worst possible preparation—feverish thirst for all things hitherto denied, and strong determination to retrieve lost time.

Meanwhile the "children next door" had also gone on growing up—from little savages to youths and maidens of strong character; much in need of chiselling, no doubt, but sound material for the Master-worker's hand.

So time went on.

Dorothea, "gift of God," returned home "finished;" Albert became master of his own ways and means. Dorothea, frivolous and gay; Albert, like unto the other young men, his comrades in his city life.

And the parents, who had worked and planned that they might go hence with the words, "Behold us, and the children whom Thou gavest us," could only smite upon their breasts and pray that He who seemed to have laid upon them a responsibility beyond their wisdom and their strength, would cancel their mistakes and complete their ill-done task. And so they died. But—

"God fulfils Himself in many ways."

* * * * * * *

Albert Tregask is lying back in a wicker chair, a certain languor in his whole demeanour, speaking of long confinement and suffering. Dorothea is by his side.

"Why didn't you send for me, you poor dear boy?" she asks, reproachfully.

"How could I suppose that you would care to leave your life at Mrs. Vere's to turn sick-nurse?" says he. "If it hadn't been for Gus finding me out—— But there is such a change in you," he adds, looking wistfully into her face, "since—since——"

The sentence remains unfinished. The last time that they met—three years ago—was at the reading of their father's will. Since then they have been going their own way: he among his own gay set, she under the wing of the brilliant Mrs. Vere, who took her up upon her mother's death, and on her father's almost adopted her.

"I have disappointed Mrs. Vere," says Dorothea, quietly. "She will have no more of me."

"I know," nods Albert, "by refusing all the offers she had set her heart upon for you. I had the history from Gus."

"I don't know why I did it," the girl goes on, "except that instinct prompted the conservation of my liberty, which out-values all the riches, after all. I might have ridden in my carriage half-a-dozen times over if I would but have listened to her advice."

"'A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth,'" quotes Albert, "nor a woman's either, I suppose."

Dorothea looks up quickly. Scripture quotations used not to be in Albert's line.

"Gus told me I should find you changed, too," says she.

Just then the door opens, and a young man looks in. "Are the confidences over?"

"I'm so thankful that you found him." *p.* 154.

Young Marauders.

asks he, in a serio-comic tone. This is Gus himself, who, having brought Dorothea to her brother, with true delicacy has left them to enjoy their first few moments together alone.

"Barely begun, old man," answers Albert, however. "They are so many and so long; but it's all the same."

Whereupon Gus walks in without further ado, and straight up to Dorothea, resting a hand round her shoulder as one who has a right.

"Yes," observes he, contemplating Albert with something between affection and pride, "he *is* a bit changed. But he doesn't look so bad, considering."

Dorothea steals a glance up at her lover, and her hand finds his.

"I'm so thankful that you found him," murmurs she.

"And yourself," says Gus, audaciously, "otherwise I couldn't have brought you to him now."

"Nor yet have kept her for yourself when this knee of mine gets right," puts in Albert, facetiously. "That's the best part of the bargain, I suspect."

"It's rather a one-sided bargain, I must confess," says Gus; "for not being one of Mrs. Vere's 'offers,' there's no carriage attached, or anything of that sort."

"It began in the days when you and she used to scramble up on to that wall," he went on presently. And they fell to talking of this old time, when Gus was one of the "children next door," and of their loss, that seemed to them a much greater loss now, and of the wanderings in the "far country" since.

"Strange," mused Dorothea, at length, "the different paths by which we have been brought—you by suffering, and I——"

"And you?"

Dorothea's pretty head drooped as she added, softly, "And I by love. I was not a fit gift, you see, for such a noble man as Gus; and yet he loved me so! How could I do otherwise than seek to be more worthy of his love?"

"And now you are 'God's gift' to him," her brother added; "just as our mother meant you should be when she named you so. If only they had lived to see this day!"

"And it was love," he went on presently, "that brought me to get the best out of my suffering—the strong love of a brother-man. Ah, well; no matter what the path, so that our feet are brought back to the King's highway."

So the old mistake was cancelled, and the ill-done task was made complete.

Let parents take comfort in the moral of this tale, and go about their work of love in faith, sure that where they fail through ignorance, the balance of their wisdom will be made up. But let them beware of giving quarter to negligence; for if mothers gain their time for ease or for society by handing over their children's plastic brains and hearts to any paid helper, or if fathers neglect *themselves* to fill in the foundation of their sons' morality, there shall be no excuse for them.

Above all, let both see to it that, in the days to come, when they are gone, Nature's mysterious law, "heredity," may have no evil record against them in the written pages of their children's lives. FLORENCE E. BURCH.

ABOUT GIRLS.

BY F. M. HOLMES.

IF the besetting sin of boys is activity in the wrong place—called mischief; so the besetting sin of girls is often extravagant emotionalism — called sentimentality.

With many we gladly admit this is not so. There are many healthy, happy girls who enjoy an active existence, and a good romp with their brothers, and are not unduly sentimental; further, there are numbers who have a certain amount of weak health which prevents pressure being put upon them to work at school or engage largely in the active duties of home.

Yet this being allowed, is it not the fact that the besetting weakness of numbers of girls is an excess of sentiment that may take various forms — some more objectionable and dangerous than others? That a girl should be more emotional than a boy is, we suppose, only natural and right, just as women as a sex are more emotional and more swayed by their feelings than men. But it is a thousand pities, if not absolutely disastrous, that that emotion should be allowed to run to seed into twaddly sentimentality, or explode into snappish fits of ill-temper.

That there are also other besetting sins of girls—as, for instance, frivolity, excessive love of dress, and sheer laziness, disguised under the name of poor health—is also to be admitted. But are not these often the excess of a right feeling? We all love to see our little daughters as bright and happy and innocently gay as they possibly can be; we all love to see them charmingly and suitably dressed; we all are anxious that they should not be pressed with lessons, or with any hard work when they really are not feeling well. Yet we cannot help thinking that the border line between innocent gaiety and frivolity, between suitable clothing and excessive love of dress, between laziness and poor health, is often and often overstepped. And careful indeed should parents be to see that this is not the case.

"Oh, I much prefer little girls to boys," said one mother, "you can make them look so pretty." And of course if this is the prevailing idea in a mother's mind, it is not to be wondered at if girls do grow up to be too fond of dress.

But perhaps the greatest difficulty in dealing with girls lies in the question of poor health. A growing girl has a little headache, she is not feeling well, has a little attack of indigestion perhaps; the fond mother is alarmed, yields to her daughter's entreaties, and keeps her from school for a week, lounging and lazy, and growing more and more sentimental, and possibly selfish or self-absorbed, until the healthy work of a whole term is injured!

Whereas a brisk walk in the fresh morning air, whether the child be a boarder or a day scholar, would have

dissipated the headache, brought roses to the wan cheeks, brightness to the eye, and healthy tone to the nerves. Converse with companions, too, and the stimulus of friendly rivalry with them in class, would have braced up the mind.

If the activity of boys in wrong directions needs to be checked, the activity of girls in certain suitable and useful directions needs often to be healthily stimulated. Once let a girl think she is to pose as an interesting invalid, or to be constantly excused from her work on every little pretext, or that she is to be always "giving way," and her happiness and usefulness are likely to be sadly marred throughout life.

"If I had given up," said a dear old lady to me, "I should have been in my grave long ago." She has been an invalid almost all her life, but her spirit, her determination not to be conquered by ill feelings and pain, have kept her up, and she is now an octogenarian, and indeed quite active for her age.

Then teach your girls to be self-reliant. That charming mingling of maiden modesty, of frank fearlessness, and of true self-reliance which mark many of our English girls is right and much to be commended. It aroused the admiration of a French friend of mine, who compared it favourably with the comparative helplessness and incapacity of certain French girls who had been boxed up in convent schools.

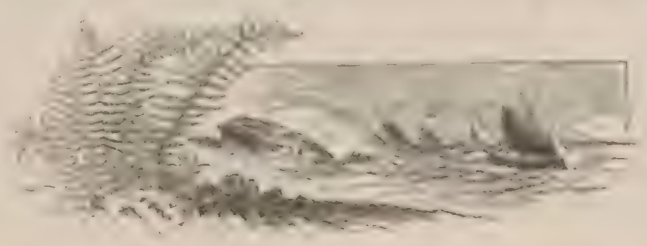
But the very freedom which is so marked a feature of life among English girls and women to-day is not without its dangers and difficulties. Here again the tendency to excess is to be noticed. We have ugly and sometimes insolent self-assertiveness, which is most obnoxious in men and women, boys and girls alike; and we have vulgar impudence and snappish aggressiveness and consummate self-conceit, which in a boy would soon bring condign punishment. But of course a girl's—as a woman's—weakness is her strength, and she does not get the box on the ears, or the smart strokes on the hand, or the rough-and-tumble fight which an impudently "cheeky" boy usually soon brings on himself by such conduct. Yet such faults as we have indicated must be checked and punished, and that promptly, too, in girls unless they are to become greatly spoiled.

A profound mistake in dealing with girls is the idea that they are all alike. Girls differ as much as boys. There is the merry-eyed, round-cheeked little damsel who delights in "fuzzy" hair (I trust that all ladies will forgive me if I have spelt that word incorrectly), and is ever ready for fun; she cares nought, and probably never will, about ancient history, or the groves of grave Academe. To talk about the higher education for such a girl is bosh. If you force her into it you will probably break her health and spirits, and warp her bright young mind. Nevertheless, she can profit by, and should have a really sound and sensible education in which Dr. Guthrie's 'ologies—stitch-ology, bakeology, etc., may find their place. Her future life is not hard to read. She will most likely marry early, and lead a very happy life as wife and mother.

In sharp contrast, there is the dark-browed, heavy-eyed girl. She has probably double the brain power, and half the sprightly good temper of the last. Her chances of happiness are probably only half as great as the other's in this inscrutable world. Let her study by all means, if her health does not really suffer, and do not fail to check that ill-temper that probably is lurking about her character.

Then there is the romantic and the sentimental girl, the gossip, and the sly, deceptive maiden. The gossip is one of the most prevalent types. Bless the little chatterbox, she does not at first do much harm. But if she be a mean and cruel, or ill-tempered gossip, that is different. Such are among the worst types, and ill-natured gossip cannot be too sharply checked. If some boys are apt at times to be rough and pugnacious, girls are sometimes worse with their tongues. Ill-natured, spiteful, and even exasperating talk, of which some are guilty at times, promotes an infinity of mischief and of unhappiness. If such things must be, I would as soon see a couple of boys fight out their differences manfully with their fists, as hear the spiteful, and often malignant gossip of the other sex. That is, I suppose, because I am an unsympathetic male person. The tendency to stabbing and fighting with the tongue should be stopped.

Apparently the High School system is not yet felt to be entirely satisfactory for girls. From a little pamphlet by Miss Lucy H. M. Soulsby, head-mistress of the Oxford High School, it appears that schools produce a gulf between some girls and their mothers, which Miss Soulsby earnestly deprecates: "Make any sacrifice of education, and keep your daughter to yourself," she writes. But she is equally convinced that the gulf need not be, and she counsels the mother to try and recognise and understand "new-born feelings and aspirations, hitherto latent in her daughter." And she also denounces, in stronger terms than I should care to use, "the idiotic admiration some girls lavish on their teacher." She adds further, "No one gets more provoked with a sentimental headstrong girl than I do, but . . . I am convinced that there is a strain of good running through their most irritating folly, and that this would have a better chance if the mother did not show such a vivid consciousness of the folly. Fathers have often more hold over such girls just because they do not understand them quite so well." Poor fathers! may it not be that they understand only too well, but prefer to shut their eyes to the irritating folly—as Miss Soulsby suggests should be done? Undoubtedly there are little sentimental ebullitions which it is wiser to ignore sometimes in growing girls than to punish or to reprehend. Miss Soulsby pleads for a close union between mother and daughter; and she asks also that a girl should be taught moral thoughtfulness, have learnt to bear monotony unrepiningly, and that she may not have had her good sayings repeated, nor have been encouraged to ask intelligent questions *in company*. "I would also ask," she writes, "that neither her affections nor her religious feelings should have been worked upon, but that she should have been made to feel instinctively that 'it's right' is an unanswerable and final reason." This is admirable advice, and comes well and fairly from one who must have had considerable experience in dealing with numbers of girls of varied characters and tastes. To be sympathetic with girls, but to teach them to do right because it is right, are sound guiding principles.



THE PLEASANT WORD FIRST.

To try to correct the faults of others, and so help them to what is better, is not unfrequently a duty, from the performance of which we ought not to ask to be excused. But this work is unpleasant, at least to all who are in any degree fitted to do it. It is also full of difficulties, so that many times we unjustifiably shrink from making the attempt. We had resolved to say something, but we did not say it.

On the other hand, we as many times, it may be, come to perceive that we have uttered too hastily what was in our heart. What shall we do? When we have something unpleasant to say, find something pleasant to say first. Can we do this? Yes, almost always. And we need not flatter; we may speak the truth. Hardly any person is wholly bad: there is some part left somewhere which can be commended, or at least spoken of pleasantly. Be sure to find that part first, and do not be afraid to make the most of it. A great deal that appears at first sight to be wilful wickedness or wrong-doing is, in its origin, thoughtlessness or mistake; so that, instead of reproof, instruction is what is needed. Here especially is it necessary to bring out to view and commend what is good. It prepares the way for useful reproof, and it is often the only thing that makes such reproof possible.

How many a mother has found, greatly to the grief of her motherly heart, that her boy, as he grows up, needs some kind of reproof or correction nearly every day! Now, the boy is almost unknown that has not, if you can find it, a warm corner in his heart for his mother. Let, then, the mother find that corner, and make it as large and as warm as possible, before she proceeds to the unpleasant duty of reproving or correcting him. And it may be that the child, if not wholly inexcusable, has yet only made a mistake; therefore, do not, in your surprise and grief, meet him sharply. Find something to speak well of in the first place; the correction may come in afterwards. The boy, and the girl too, though unable to grow up aright without a great deal of assistance, such as they do not naturally feel much fondness for, will rarely seek questionable companionship and amusement away from home while the affection which somewhere in their hearts they really have all the time is properly acknowledged and carefully cultivated. It is only when the necessary unpleasantness is made to appear first that it cannot be borne.

And how is this matter as regards the mutual relations of husband and wife? The husband is not a perfect husband, and the wife is not a perfect wife. The ideals so fondly cherished before marriage have not found their realisation. Yet in each character there are excellences also which before marriage had not been perceived. In the delicate duty of mutual helpfulness, through suggestions as to improvement or amendment on either side, how shall possible unwelcome contingencies be surely warded off? It must be by making the most of every good and agreeable thing which each perceives in the other; by always saying the pleasant word first. Let the suggestion come afterwards. There are some necessary remarks which, like some good books, need a very skilfully-prepared introduction in order to be favourably received.

It is said of an exceptionally successful preacher of the Gospel that he ever endeavoured to keep pleasantly in the minds of his people the progress in Christian character which they had already made, while he encouraged them, by what they had done well, to go on to perfection. To be anywhere above the lowest condition was better than to be at one's worst. So it came to pass that the very presence of the pastor was like an inspiration, and a help to right living.

Is this not the true philosophy of helping others and of preventing trouble? It costs nothing, and it may do a great deal for ourselves as well as others, if we will always remember to say the pleasant word first.

MR. THORNE'S WEDDING DINNER.

"Two letters, ma'am," and as she spoke the smiling maid handed them to her mistress on the old-fashioned silver waiter kept for the purpose, though so rarely used now.

The lady took the letters and examined the handwriting. "Is Miss Dorothy ready?" she asked.

As if in answer to this inquiry, the door was opened and a pale, delicate-looking lady entered the breakfast-room.

"Letters!" she exclaimed, with some eagerness; for their world had gone on and left these two ladies well-nigh forgotten in the old-fashioned cottage to which they had retired when reverses of fortune compelled them to leave the family mansion close by.

This event in itself was bad enough, but a few months later an uncle died from whom they expected to inherit a fortune, and when it was found that this had been left to their only and younger brother, they quarrelled with him over the matter, and turned their backs upon him as well as on the world in general.

"Do you know that handwriting, Dorothy?" asked the elder lady.

"Isn't it from George?" replied the invalid. "This looks like Avice Grey's handwriting," she added, as she handed the second letter to her sister with a sigh, for she thought of the time when she and Avice were close friends.

Having duly examined the envelopes, Miss Thorne slowly

"What does all this mean?"

opened one, and the next minute exclaimed, "It is from George! and he wants to come to dinner, he says."

"When?" asked Miss Dorothy, in a tone of eager expectation.

"To-day—he expects to reach Tipcroft about six this evening, and asks if we will postpone our dinner until seven that he may share it with us. Did you ever hear of such a thing, Dorothy?" said the lady, in an angry tone.

"It is rather inconsiderate," admitted her sister; "but men do not think of things as women do."

"But—but, Dorothy, for George to say he is coming to dine with us, and we have sent him no invitation! Does he think we can still afford to give dinner-parties when he has robbed us?"

"No, no, not robbed us," interrupted the invalid; "it would only have been fair, perhaps, to have divided uncle's property. It would have made a good deal of difference to us," she added.

"Of course it would, and I shall let him see we cannot afford dinner-parties now. I shall have to be out all the morning, but you can send Ann to the butcher's for a mutton chop, for there is not quite enough cold meat for all of us," and Miss Thorne smiled grimly as she thought of how her brother would look when he saw the cold beef and a solitary mutton chop served up on the family plate, for Miss Thorne told her sister this had better be taken out and cleaned for the occasion.

"And Avice—what does she say?" asked Miss Dorothy, looking at the other letter.

"Avice is coming too," exclaimed her sister the next minute; "she says she will be passing through the town on her way to Scotland, and will spend the evening with us."

The sisters looked at each other for a minute in silent amazement, and then Miss Dorothy said, "She will be here to dinner too, then, and we shall want two chops."

"Yes," answered Miss Thorne, sharply; and then she turned to the breakfast-table, and declined to say anything more concerning their expected visitors.

"You and Ann must manage it between you," she said. "I have promised to spend the morning at the Rectory, and I must go," and Miss Thorne hurried away the moment breakfast was over, without saying a word to Ann about the cooking or what they would have for dinner.

"Mr. George is coming to dinner, Ann," said Miss Dorothy, when she found her sister had gone out and left her to manage everything.

"Then we must have some nice puddings and pies, ma'am," replied the practical maid—"I have heard my mother say that Mr. George was so fond of pastry and sweets, that he did not care whether there was meat or not, so long as there was pie and pudding to be had."

"Yes, I remember that. But how are we to get pies and puddings, as your mistress has gone out? She told me to send for two mutton chops, and to get the plate cleaned, but——"

"If you will just give me leave to manage it, Miss Dorothy, I will get a dinner that will please Mr. George," interrupted the girl—"my mother showed me how to make Mr. George's favourite pudding in case he should come home one day and you should not want to be bothered

with the cooking. Yesterday mistress gave me the eggs and sugar and butter, and everything we are likely to want for the next week; so if you will give me leave I will use these," said Ann, delighted at the prospect of putting into practice some of the cookery lessons of her mother, who had controlled the kitchen at the Thorne mansion for many years before she was married.

To be thus relieved of her care gave Miss Dorothy strength to look after the details of the household, while Ann devoted herself to the delightful task of making pies and tarts and custards enough to give a respectable appearance to the long dining-table.

When Miss Thorne returned about two o'clock, the whole house was redolent of the unwonted cooking; and as soon as she had taken off her bonnet, and donned her cap, she hurried down to the kitchen to see what Ann could be doing.

"What does all this mean?" asked the lady, rather severely, as she stood beside the kitchen table, and surveyed the tarts and pies already made, and then looked at Ann busily whisking eggs.

"This is for Mr. George's favourite pudding," said Ann, with a pleasant smile, not pausing to answer her mistress for fear the delicate ingredients should be spoiled.

With another look round the kitchen, Miss Thorne went back to the drawing-room to her sister, to wait the arrival of their expected guests, and ask her what the preparations meant.

"It is to please Ann and George too," said Miss Dorothy, and with this explanation Miss Thorne had to be content.

To the surprise of the sisters, their guests arrived together, but as it was near dinner-time, little was said about this matter. "I have only got a plain joint for you, George," said his elder sister, for this had taken the place of the chops after all.

"Never mind the joint: if you have some pie or pudding, I can do without the rest," said the gentleman, in a genial tone. He was in a mood to be pleased with anything, and when he saw his favourite pudding brought on to the table, he rose from his seat, went across the room, and kissed his sister warmly. "Now I know we shall be friends again," he said. "I wondered whether I was forgotten in my old home. Ruth, let us end the miserable difference that has divided us. You shall have two-thirds of uncle's property as you ought to have had at first, only we were both too proud to give in over a trifle. The pudding has conquered, Avice, so now we will tell our secret," he added, turning to the lady he had brought with him.

The sisters looked at each other, and then at their friend, but she had her eyes steadily fixed on her plate.

"Well, as Avice leaves me to tell the story, I will do it in a few words. She was Avice Grey when she wrote the letter, but she is Avice Thorne now, for she became my wife this morning, and we declared that if it were possible, we would eat our wedding dinner with you. I told her I should know whether we could be friends for the future by what you put on the table, and friends we shall be now, I hope, to the end of our lives."

Ann's share in Mr. Thorne's wedding dinner was explained afterwards, but it did not alter the bond of friendship and affection set up anew between the brother and sisters; and none have reason to regret the cementing of the old ties, for all are happier and more useful for the sweetness that has thus come into their lives once more.

EMMA LESLIE.

"MOTHER'S ROOM."

By the Author of "We Wives," etc.

I THINK "Mother" is always the last person in the house to think of herself or her surroundings. The reception rooms must always be pretty for visitors, the nurseries bright for the little ones, the study cheerful for the master of the house, but "Mother's Room" might often be called The Cripple's Refuge! There chairs too fragile for the boys' hard wear and tear, chintz too faded for the girls' boudoirs, pictures too ugly for the children's playroom, may too often be seen. I say "*too*" frequently, for the spirit of altruism may be carried too far by "Mother."

Her room ought to be the brightest and most cheerful of all. It ought to be like the chamber called "Peace" by Bunyan, or like one of the "significant" rooms shown Christiana by the Interpreter. Its window—to speak metaphorically and literally too—ought, if possible, to look towards the sun-rising, and have a view very delectable to behold.

In that room Mother will have long talks with the Lord of the Pilgrims. To that room sick and feverish little ones will occasionally be brought. In that room angels of life and death will perhaps meet. Ought it not to be the *best* in the house?

I have, as I write, a pleasant memory of a spot in the land of long ago, where a suffering mother often lay. I recall to mind the big, chintz-covered sofa with its banks of soft, snow-white pillows; the pretty bed-hangings; a little round porthole of a window, knocked out by loving hands, just in front of the invalid's couch. Through this a Gloire de Dijon peeped, with its yellow blossoms, or almost as pretty deep red sprays. I remember all this, and the kind of sweet awe with which the children of the house—aye, and other children too—crept in for a loving welcome and tender kiss.

Mother's Room! It has been a sermon all through these years, eloquent with love and beauty and holiness.

This may seem a long prelude to a few thoughts that flitted through a mother's mind the other day as she did up her own room. It was the last in the house to be furbished, *of course*. The hideous blue-and-white spotty paper had been endured for years, the yellow-grained paint put up with, the cumbersome dressing-table cherished, the rickety presses thought quite good enough. Now all is altered, and the expense has been almost "nil."

For the benefit of other mothers I will jot down just how less than a five-pound note has changed a lumber-room into one of the object lessons of life.

It is a queer, old-fashioned, odd-shaped chamber, with crooked ceilings and quaint corners. The walls have been papered with a "pomegranate" art paper of a pink terra-cotta shade at 1s. a piece; the ceiling papered with a yellow and pinky paper of somewhat faint hue; the woodwork all to match.

The three-light bow window is a high, old-fashioned one, with deep panelling below. It is shaded by four art-

muslin curtains in terra and cream. These are made quite short, only just to the top of the painted wainscot, with frills at sides and bottom. These curtains are hung on slender brass rods (2d. a foot), and run easily to act as blinds. The hideous linen rollers that acted on springs and with strings are packed away and hidden from sight.

"Mother" had a lingering fancy for the iron bedstead on which she had slept for so long, but it has been quite transformed with two coats of Aspinall's enamel. A narrow brass rod (3d. a foot) and bright new knobs (1cd. a pair) have taken the place of an iron border and white screws. A spring mattress (35s.) and a coverlet of cream linen, embroidered in silk, and edged with deep Torchon lace (this last unpriceable because made by Mother's daughters), look quite in keeping with the rest of the room.

A curtain of art muslin hangs from about three feet above the head of the bed, and another on a stair-rod does duty as a splasher behind the washstand. This said washstand is one of the cheap 5s. ones, with a tray beneath. It is painted and enamelled terra-cotta, has had an old broom-handle cut in two and screwed to the sides, to act as towel rails, and a dish of corresponding colour placed on the tray for the big sponge Mother loves.

The dressing-table has been made to order, and only cost 7s. 6d. It is common deal, and has two drawers with brass handles at 8½d. a pair screwed on. Of course it is painted terra, and a pair of brass brackets for candles are attached to the looking-glass. A slip of cream linen edged with crochet lace lies on the top, and on it a set of toilet necessaries. The ledge underneath is a receptacle for a neatly-kept row of shoes and boots.

"Mother" does not like the very early sunlight that streams in at four o'clock in summer-time, from over the distant, shimmering sea, so a brass curtain rod has been attached to the wall at one side of her bed, and suspended by a slight chain (costing 4d. a yard) from the ceiling. To this an art serge curtain—bought for 1s. 4½d. a yard at a sale—is looped, and just touches the floor. At the foot of her bed, between it and one of the doors of the room, a screen is placed. That screen is a *chef d'œuvre* of economy! The frame, bought at an auction for 1s., is five feet high, and has three folds. Aspinall and art muslin to match the window curtains have made it into a thing of beauty at a cost of about 4s.

In one corner beside Mother's bed a bracket holds a candlestick. Under it a luminous matchbox is nailed, and beneath that again a low, square table holds Bible, etc.

You will wonder if Mother has gone to the expense of a new Brussels carpet to match the rest of her room. I am afraid you will think her not so conservative as such a sober matron ought to be, when you hear that her ten-year-old square has been taken up and "bestowed" (as they call it in these parts) on a poor body. Five-pennyworth of permanganate of potash has stained the floor a deep, rich brown, which a favourite little maid rubs over with bees-wax and turpentine once a week. On it are scattered three 7s. 6d. Kurd rugs in white, terra-cotta and cream.

A handsome officer's chest of drawers with sunk brass handles, a couple of 3s. 9d. stained rush chairs, a lounge seat upholstered in cretonne for 18s. 6d., and a home-made ottoman complete the equipment of Mother's room.

A tiny dressing-room off it contains a hanging press, painted by deft fingers with sprays of hawthorn and kingly foxgloves; a big bath, with its art blanket; and "baby's bed," an affair all terra-cotta and white and gold.

Whenever I have the privilege of entering "Mother's Room" I feel that the name thereof ought to be "Beautiful." More beautiful, perhaps, because it stands just by the highwayside of homely duties.

Mother's sons will remember it as they go out into the world by-and-by. They will never forget the text on the pink wall, telling of God's perfect way. It will be mixed up with a roseate flush that always brightens the ceiling and door frames, and it will speak of better things than an earthly abiding-place.

Mother's daughters will, maybe, soon be called to build up houses of their own, and the influence of the Peace Chamber will overshadow all they do. The exquisite purity and sweetness of such a room as Mother's will dwell in their minds as a fragrant memory.

Will it then have been beautified in vain?

COMRADESHIP.

I SOMETIMES feel like exclaiming, "Oh, if we only understood the blessedness of having our children with us, and did not let a gulf form between us, that some day, when we try, we shall not be able to bridge!"

Children in their innocence should lead us nearer to God. Yet how often the little ones are thrust aside while an unprofitable conversation is carried on, that leaves us no better! Parents oft-times leave out the children, waiting for their minds to develop, until they have drifted into sin, or grown beyond them in knowledge.

Can there be anything more sad than to have a child feel no need of a mother's confidence? And yet we have witnessed many such instances. Why is it so? Away back in the child's early days, when its mind was receptive to good influences, the mother let other things come in between herself and child, and as a plant grows towards the light, the little one sought enjoyment elsewhere. There was no comradeship between mother and child.

The little boy came in with his face all aglow, to tell how high his kite had sailed, or of a bird's nest he had found, and he was told to "be quiet."

We do not advocate that a child should be the only talker within a home. Children should be taught deference to their elders, and respect for the aged; but a child is entitled to a reasonable recognition.

A child, in order to learn, must naturally be inquisitive. Everything is new to it. All about it is wonderland, and it must ask in order to learn.

Neither is it good for a child to be too much repressed. Joyousness of spirit leads to healthfulness. It is sad to see a child old before its time. The days when we cannot rejoice in them come all too soon. Mothers should realise that if companions are expected of their children, they need formative lessons. Keep the little ones about you, letting words drop from your lips pure as pearls, and in later years they will be reflected as enduring gems upon the tablets of your children's memories.

"How do you keep your sons so near you?" asked one mother of another. "I would give anything if my boys were as contented to remain at home in the evenings," and there was heard a sigh.

"Mother is the best comrade we have," answered the eldest son, for his mother. "We always know if we go to mother with anything good, she will appreciate it; and if it is doubtful, she will counsel us. Mother is our senior partner."

S. R. S.

DRESS AND DRESSMAKING.

Fig. 38.

We hear that there will not be any very great changes in fashion this season, but we cannot help thinking that the rage for Watteau pleats on dresses, jackets, and capes must subside ere long. Princess dresses, as we intimated in our July number, as well as those made in imitation of them, with or without the Watteau pleat, are being used more and more.

One great advantage about this, as well as most of the styles chosen for dresses just now, is that they do not take a great deal of material. Six to seven yards of double-width material are now ample, whereas formerly from eight to ten yards were used.

The dress skirt is still worn very plain. Where trimming is used, it is mostly put at the extreme edge, and consists of rows of velvet or braid, or a ruching made of silk or the same material as the dress, which certainly makes a very pretty finish to the costume. Where flounces are used, they are generally very narrow—say from four to six inches.

Ribbons and lace are much used as trimmings, especially on the bodice, and in long ends from the waist.

The sacque jacket—such as we showed in our June number, Fig. 22, only a little more fitting in the back, and consequently more becoming—is very much worn, and we can supply the pattern under that number. Very elegant materials are employed for these jackets. Silken fabrics lined throughout generally of two kinds as satin and moiré, pekin or brochés, with pleats of velvet, as well as cloth with pleats of silk or velvet, are all more or less general.

The cape form of mantle is still very much in favour, and the short upper cape is being adopted for the "sacque jacket," made with the double or Watteau pleat already mentioned.

Fig. 39.

Fig. 38 shows a dress made with an Eton jacket, which our readers will recognise as being after the order of the boy's jacket of one of our famous public schools.

The umbrella skirt is adopted for this costume, and the material used is fancy tweed cloth. It is lined throughout. Serge is also very often used for this style, and answers very well. The best way to make this bodice is to have an under lining on to which the front is arranged with small pleats, and down the centre a narrow frill at the edge, while at the waist is the Empire band, now so popular. This should be let into the side seam, and hooked over to the left side after the dress is fastened down the front. The back of this under bodice will be of lining hemmed round the armholes and at the lower edge, while the neck is finished with a band collar. This vest is usually made of silk. The Eton jacket is lined in front with sarcenet, and is turned back with revers, which are often faced with silk. A piece of muslin placed between the silk and cloth will make them set better.

The sleeve has a puff reaching to the elbow, and a gauntlet cuff. Ends of ribbon come from the waist on the right side. The dress takes six yards of cloth, four and a-half of lining for the skirt, and one yard of silk for the vest, and two and a-half of lining for the jacket and vest.

Fig. 40.

Fig. 39. Here we show a lady's cloak, which will also do well for girls sixteen years of age and upwards. It is very desirable to possess a garment of this kind, as it is a great protection in bad weather, and can also be used as an extra wrap when the colder days of winter are upon us.

This cloak is made on a yoke, and has the usual double box-pleat down the centre of the back; a place for the arms to come through is made under the side pleats. The yoke and high collar are trimmed with jet. A facing of Italian cloth down the fronts will be necessary, where also a stay is put on so that the cloak fastens invisibly. A grey straw bonnet is worn with this cloak, and is trimmed with black lace and jet.

Fig. 40 shows a pattern for a lady's dressing gown or morning wrapper. It must be made of some soft material, such as twill flannel, tennis flannel, merino, or the like. It is made princess style, body and skirt being in one. The body has a half-fitting lining, and over this the stuff is gathered with three or four runners in front and laid in two double box-pleats at the back, which gives the fulness for the skirt. The neck is finished with a pleating of the material about four inches wide, and a band of contrast material or ribbon is let in under the back pleats to confine the waist. The large puff sleeve has a gathered cuff.

The gown takes eight yards of double-width stuff.

Flat patterns can be supplied of Figs. 38, 39, and 40, 6½d. each; also of sacque jackets or three-quarter mantles, 6½d. each. Address, "M. C. Pattern," 9, Paternoster Row, E.C.